(b) if so, the details of the cases of misuse of DEPB that have come to light in the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) the action taken by the Government against the guilty exporters?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) Although there have been some instances of misuse of DEPB scheme, it would not be correct to take the view that the scheme is greatly being misued by the exporters. Various steps have already been taken in consultation with Ministry of Finance to prevent scope of misuse of the scheme. Details of the measures taken for checking misuse include (i) value cap on items which have a DEPB rate of 15% or more; (ii) introduction of Present market Value (PMV) assessment system; (iii) Verification of Shipping Bills before credit is used to clear import consignments; (iv) Scaling down of DEPB rates on number of items. In cases of fraud, suppression of facts or misrepresentation penal action is initiated jointly by DRI & Directorate General of Foreign Trade. Investigations have been initiated against 38 firms. 13 persons have been arrested and penalties and fines have been imposed in two cases.

श्रीलंका से शुल्क मुक्त माल का आयात

2962. **श्री खान गुफ़रान जाहिदी:** क्या वाणिज्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार ने श्रीलंका से चाय, रबर व नारियल को शुल्क मुक्त आयात को अनुमति न देने का निर्णय लिया है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो क्या वे वस्तुएं भारत व श्रीलंका के बीच हुए ऐतिहासिक मुक्त व्यापार समझौते में शामिल हैं; और

(ग) इन वस्तुओं को समझौते से बाहर रखने के क्या कारण हैं?

वाणिज्य मंत्री (श्री रामकृष्ण हेगड़े): (क) से (ग) भारत और श्रीलंका के बीच मुक्त व्यापार करार के उपबंधों के तहत दोनों देशों को उन वस्तुओं की सूची का आदान-प्रदान करना होगा जिन पर टैरिफ अधिमान उपलब्ध होंगे तथा जिन वस्तुओं पर टैरिफ अधिमान उपलब्ध नहीं होंगे ये सूचियां तैयार की जा रही हैं। सूचियां तैयार करते समय विभिन्न मंत्रालयों, राज्य सरकारों, उद्योग तथा व्यापार संघों आदि की चिन्ताओं पर समुचित विचार किया गया है।

VRS in Coffee Board

2963. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) how many employees and officers of the Coffee Board in Groups I,B,C, and D have been relieved under the V.R.S. since 1995-96;

(b) whether all those who opted the VRS have received pension, gratuity, ex-gratia, leave salary etc. due to them; and

(c) if not, the reasons and group-wise details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) A total number of 1684 officials comprising 12 Group A, 100 Group B, 945 Group C & 627 Group D have been relieved under Voluntary Retirement Scheme since 1995-96.

(b) and (c) The settlement of pension, gratuity, ex-gratia and leave salary for all the officials who have availed of Voluntary Retirement Schemes has been effected in full.

Decline in Exports to Traditional Markets

2964. SHRI S. PETER ALPHONSE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Exports have declined during 1997-98 and 1998-99;

(b) whether it is also a fact that exports to some of our traditional markets